

## Leave some behind

*When thou cuttest down thine harvest in thy field, and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow: that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hands.*

*Deuteronomy 5:29*

The principle put forth in this law regarding the grain harvests is applied twice more in the verses that follow it pertaining to the olive and grape harvests. It was the way that the agricultural economy of Israel would naturally provide for the needy. This provision excluded the need for an organized government program, and it also recognized the dignity of the needy by allowing them to work for their food by gleaning the fruits left behind. The account in the book of Ruth illustrates the outworking of this process, showing also how the younger Ruth was able to demonstrate her familial care for her mother-in-law Naomi, thus providing for both widows.

The last part of this verse presents an additional benefit of this rule – the LORD’s blessing of the work of one’s hands. There is implication here of multiple aspects of that blessing. One may be the LORD’s multiplying the yield of the farmer’s work. Yet another may be that the farmer would benefit from the satisfaction of knowing that his work not only provided for his own family, but also for those whose needs were clearly prioritized by the LORD.

While being a specific part of the Mosaic law, this principle reaches beyond the law. *He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again (Proverbs 19:17)*. We can see it reiterated even in the New Testament. In the discussion of the Gentile churches’ collection for the Judean church, in II Corinthians 8-9, Paul elaborates on the blessing associated with giving for the needs of others: *And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work (II Corinthians 9:8)*. In the Ephesian epistle: *Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth (Ephesians 4:28)*.

Although few of us are farmers in this day, we can still attend to this principle in the work that God has given us to do. Yes, it is primary for us to work to provide for the needs of our households. Yet, as we appropriate the yields of our work to various needs, we should also continue to “leave some behind” for those with sincere needs, that we might benefit from seeing the LORD bless others with those provisions, for the sake of His kingdom. Let us prayerfully consider our stewardship of this principle.